

Book Review

# Islamic Wealth and the SDGs: Global Strategies for Socio-economic Impact

Billah, Mohd Ma'Sum. (2021). *Islamic Wealth and the SDGs: Global Strategies for Socio-economic Impact*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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*Islamic Wealth and the SDGs: Global Strategies for Socio-economic Impact* highlights the significant role Islamic finance can play in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (p. 10). In 2015, the United Nations adapted 17 sustainable development goals as a global effort to end poverty, increase education, and ensure that all people can live a healthy and fulfilling life. Islamic finance, on the other hand, is a financial system based on the principles of Islamic law, which emphasizes social justice and ethical values in finance. Recently, the Islamic finance industry has become a major player in the international financial system. The SDGs and Islamic finance tools have been brought together as complementary frameworks to promote sustainable development and social justice.

Islamic ethical wealth is wealth sourced and dispensed from lawful ventures that are approved by Shariah law. Shariah law serves as a framework for ethical and financial practices in Islamic finance where Shariah scholars (which typically involves the expertise of trained scholars in Islamic law and jurisprudence) review and approve financial products and services to ensure their compliance with Islamic principles and guidelines (pp. 76, 328). Islamic ethical wealth refers to generating and managing wealth in accordance with the principles of Islamic ethics. In Islamic finance, ethical wealth management is based on the principles of social justice, fairness, and responsibility, as outlined in the Quran and the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad) (p. 277). Islamic ethical wealth is significant; besides sadaqah, both zakat and waqf have tremendous capacities to contribute to global socioeconomic development. The potential size of the annual zakat fund has been estimated between US\$200 billion and US\$1 trillion, and waqf is valued at billions of dollars (p. 253).

The principle of Islamic ethical wealth is rooted in the Quran and Sunnah, where the overall objective is to promote social justice and sustainable development. Islam teaches that wealth should be distributed for all humankind based on the fair distribution of wealth and to prevent unjustness and inequality among society (p. 270). The management process of Islamic ethical wealth is referred to as "Islamic finance," which is a financial system based on the principles of maqasid al sharia' to achieve fairness, transparency, and sustainability. The maqasid al sharia', which is defined by the concepts of need, limitation, and objective, was developed to help Muslims understand the spirit

and intention of Islamic law and to guide them in interpreting and applying them in their daily aspects, including Islamic finance (pp. 82, 101).

*Islamic Wealth and the SDGs: Global Strategies for Socio-economic Impact* is an insightful book that explores the potential of Islamic finance to support the achievement of the SDGs within the principles and concepts of maqasid al sharia'. It emphasizes the shared responsibility of individuals where wealth should be used for alleviating suffering and advocating for the common good.

The book is structured in a clear manner; it begins with an introduction and a historical background of Islamic finance and sustainable development goals and how they both align with each other. The book covers a variety of topics related to the role of Islamic finance in reducing poverty, enhancing environmental sustainability, and promoting gender equality and social justice. It provides an analysis of the compatibility of SDGs with development goals based on divine principles (p. 24). It was then followed by exploring the potential of Islamic finance to support the SDGs, including some practical examples and guidance for mobilizing Islamic finance to achieve the sustainable development goals.

Throughout 32 chapters, the book provides practical approaches and strategies for mobilizing Islamic finance to support the achievements of the sustainable development goals. The author presents a deep elaboration on the practical usage of waqf, zakat and sukuk, green sukuk, micro-finance and wealth inclusion, and their implications for the SDGs. Another aspect is his emphasis on the positive socioeconomic impacts, poverty reduction, improved healthcare and education, and gender equality as a measurement of the success of financial investments.

The book presents significant contributions that illustrate key arguments. One of the arguments presented by the authors is that the principles of Islamic finance align well with the values and goals of the SDGs, which seek to create a more sustainable and equitable world (pp. 10, 24). For example, the Islamic finance principle of shared responsibility is consistent with the SDG goal of reducing inequality, while the focus on sustainability aligns with the SDG goal of ensuring sustainable economic growth and development. Additionally, Islamic finance's focus on transparency and accountability is consistent with the SDG goal of promoting good governance and responsible business practices.

The key argument of the book is that Islamic finance has great potential to play a major role in the global effort to achieve the sustainable development goals, economic development, and social equity. The author presents a number of global strategies for using Islamic finance and wealth, including promoting zakat and sadaqah, developing Islamic social finance, supporting Islamic impact investing, promoting Islamic microfinance, developing Islamic Waqf, and developing Islamic green finance. These strategies are meant to create positive socioeconomic and sustainable impacts, including investment in health, education, and renewable energy.

On the other hand, the author highlights the challenges facing Islamic finance and the need for collaboration among stakeholders to achieve the SDGs.

He underlines the importance of engaging different stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, and the private sector in promoting and implementing these strategies.

*Islamic Wealth and the SDGs* makes a significant contribution to both the Islamic finance and humanitarian fields in several ways. It provided a new perspective and approach where Islamic finance can, indeed, play a significant role in supporting the achievement of the sustainable development goals. Additionally, the author highlights the similarities between Islamic finance principles and sustainable development goals in a way where both aim to alleviate poverty, increase access to quality health and education services, as well as achieve social justice. Billah shows that the significant Muslim scholars and institutions in the field of Islamic economics and finance have used the doctrines of *maqasid al sharia* to refer to the compatibility of Islam with contemporary issues related to economics, including the SDGs (pp. 7, 66, 82).

Considering Islamic finance as a source of funding for addressing sustainable development is significant in different ways; on one hand, it contributes to the growth of the Islamic finance industry on the global level as an importance catalyst toward global issues. On another hand, it provides a new opportunity for the achievement of the SDGs, which promotes global equity and welfare and the socioeconomic impact. Additionally, the book filled in some literature gaps related to the role of Islamic ethical wealth in addressing global issues.

Although the book addresses the potential of Islamic finance to contribute to the SDGs, it did not consider the challenges and limitation of the practical implementation of each strategy and approach. When we talk about Islamic finance, there are sophisticated rules and regulations in the Fiqh, collection, management, and distribution of Islamic financial resources. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, from a “sharia” perspective, the book did not provide insight about the people who should manage Islamic finance in terms of knowledge and expertise of Islamic regulations.

*Islamic Wealth and the SDGs* would be of interest to a diverse range of audiences interested in sustainable development, Islamic finance, and building more inclusive and equitable financial systems. The book provides a framework for integrating Islamic ethical wealth with sustainable development goals, which can inform decision makers and policy designers who are interested in promoting the achievement of the SDGs. Academics and researchers, government, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) would find the book useful. Investors and financiers interested in socially responsible and ethical investments would find the book relevant as well. I believe general readers interested in global socioeconomic issues, including poverty reduction, gender equality, and climate change, would find the book informative.

The framework of the SDGs provides a global comprehensive development program in the form of 17 key goals to be accomplished by 2030. Islamic ethical wealth can play a significant role in the process of achieving these goals. Islamic finance can make a magnificent contribution to the global agenda through the integration of Islamic finance with sustainable development goals

through the lenses of maqasid al sharia'. It creates new opportunities for investment and finance in sustainable development initiatives. It also highlights the importance of socioeconomic impact, promoting more socially responsible and ethical investment, and helping to build a more inclusive and equitable global financial system. Islamic finance can provide a unique approach to economic development that is socially responsible and sustainable.